

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 CCO-00 CIAE-00 OTPE-00 FCC-01
INR-07 NSAE-00 OC-06 USIA-06 COME-00 BIB-01 TRSE-00
/039 W

-----301108Z 030208 /12

R 300954Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6735
INFO AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 8378

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ETEL, SA
SUBJECT: ARAB BOYCOTT TELECOMMUNICATIONS

REF: (A) STATE 224661, (B) STATE 271122

1. POSSIBLE EXEMPTION OF INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS FROM
BOYCOTT PROVISIONS RAISED DECEMBER 29 WITH PTT MINISTER
KAYYAL BY DCM (MINISTER RETURNED FROM EUROPE DECEMBER 23).
KAYYAL LISTENED BUT DID NOT RESPOND FAVORABLY TO OUR PRESEN-
TATION.

2. KAYYAL'S BASIC REACTION WAS TO NOTE THAT BOYCOTT WAS
ESSENTIALLY POLITICAL QUESTION AND SHOULD BE RAISED WITH
MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COMMERCE. WE POINTED
OUT THAT WE HAD ALREADY DONE SO, AND THAT WE WERE NOW
ADDRESSING OURSELVES TO THE TECHNICAL ADVANTAGES TO SAG
IN DIRECT END-TO-END COMMUNICATIONS LINKS WHICH WOULD BE
MADE POSSIBLE BY BOYCOTT EXEMPTION. (WE DREW FROM
REFTELS AND LEFT PAPER AT END OF MEETING CONTAINING TALKING
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POINTS FROM PARA 3 REF B.)

3. KAYYAL SAID SAG WAS GENERALLY THE LEAST INCLINED OF
ARAB STATES TO GIVE EXEMPTIONS TO BOYCOTT DECISIONS; WHEN
IT DID, IT WAS ON BASIS OF EVIDENCE THAT ITS OVERALL INTERESTS
WERE IMPORTANTLY SERVED BY SUCH ACTION. HE SAID SAG

HAS WHAT IT REGARDS AS ACCEPTABLE
ALTERNATIVES TO END-TO-END LINKS INVOLVING RCA. HE ALSO
NOTED THAT IT WAS NOT UP TO HIM TO INITIATE SUCH A CHANGE,
BUT RATHER THAT RCA SHOULD ITSELF SEEK TO JUSTIFY IT.

4. WE REPEATED OUR EARLIER POINT THAT OTHER ARAB STATES
ALREADY EXEMPTED TELECOMMUNICATIONS FROM BOYCOTT, AND
THAT CENTRAL BOYCOTT OFFICE WAS RUMORED TO HAVE
DISCUSSED GENERAL EXEMPTION FOR INTERNATIONAL TELE-
COMMUNICATIONS. KAYYAL SAID (UNINTERESTEDLY) THAT HE KNEW
NOTHING OF POSSIBLE OR CONTEMPLATED CBO ACTION; HE ALSO
SAID HE DID NOT KNOW IF BOYCOTT MATTERS WOULD BE RAISED AT
COMING ARAB TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION MEETING; MEETING
WAS NOT OF MINISTERIAL LEVEL, AND HE HAD NOT SEEN ITS AGENDA.

5. COMMENT: CORE OF KAYYAL'S RESPONSE SEEMS TO US TO
BE THAT SAG SEES NO REAL ADVANTAGE IN CONSIDERING GENERAL
TELECOMMUNICATIONS EXEMPTION. POSSIBLE TECHNICAL ADVANTAGES
SEEM NOT THAT IMPORTANT (KAYYAL'S INTEREST IN OUR PRESENTATION,
WHILE POLITE, WAS SCARCELY PROFOUND), AND SAG'S UNWILLINGNESS
TO TAKE LEAD ROLE IN INTER-ARAB BOYCOTT DELIBERATIONS MAY
TILT SCALES IN FAVOR OF NON-ACTION. IN EFFORT TO SUSTAIN WHAT
LITTLE MOMENTUM REMAINS IN THIS ISSUE, WE WILL REQUEST
MFA TO SEEK DETERMINATION FROM PTT ON POSSIBLE TECHNICAL
ADVANTAGES OF REMOVING INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS FROM
BOYCOTT. THIS STEP MAY, AT MINIMUM, KEEP OUR EFFORT
ALIVE AND GIVE AN OPENING FOR RCA TO CONSIDER OTHER
APPROACHES.
PORTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TELECOMMUNICATION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, BOYCOTTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976JIDDA08378
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760476-0014
From: JIDDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976124/aaaaadv.tel
Line Count: 89
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 224661, 77 STATE 271122
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <06 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARAB BOYCOTT TELECOMMUNICATIONS
TAGS: ETEL, SA, XF
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006